



CONTACT: Stanley M. Pollack, Assistant Attorney General
Water Rights Unit
Navajo Nation Department of Justice
(928) 871-7510

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NAVAJO NATION WATER RIGHTS COMMISSION BRIEFS NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF THE NORTHEASTERN ARIZONA INDIAN WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENT

Window Rock, AZ—On Wednesday, May 11, the Navajo Nation Council received a briefing on the current status of the Arizona water rights settlement negotiations. Because those negotiations are subject to a court order to protect the confidentiality of the discussions, the briefing was held in Executive Session. Presentations were made to the Council by the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources concerning the hydrology of the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation, and the Department of Justice reported on the status of current settlement negotiations concerning Navajo water rights claims in the Lower Colorado River and Little Colorado River Basins in Arizona.

In a status report submitted to the federal district court presiding over the Navajo Nation's lawsuit concerning the Colorado River, attorneys for the Navajo Nation reported that the proposed Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement approved by the 21st Navajo Nation Council on November 4, 2010, was "too expensive" for the Arizona Delegation to support. The Council was provided details on a possible settlement that might be acceptable to Congress, but the Council, who also accepted the report, took no formal action.

At a meeting of the negotiating parties on March 23, 2011, Senator Kyl encouraged the parties to continue to negotiate a settlement and develop a package that is, "in the realm of the possible." Senator Kyl, who is retiring at the end of 2012, also informed the parties that he would need a completed settlement package by June 2011 in order to have the current Congress consider settlement legislation. It is anticipated that approval of the settlement package by the Navajo Nation and the other settling parties would be required before Congress could consider the settlement legislation.

Public information sessions will be scheduled by the Commission, once a package is ready for submission to Congress.

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For more information please contact: Commissioner Leo Manheimer, 928-871-7574.